

VZCZCXRO1451  
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHDK #1256/01 2780742  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 050742Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3152  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001256

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL AND INR/AA  
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A  
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SUBJECT: Senegalese Foreign Minister Fired

1. (SBU) Summary: In a development that has come as a shock to many in the international community, Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio has been relieved of his post and replaced by Madicke Niang, the former Minister of Justice. Niang has been replaced as Justice Minister by Minister of Education Moustapha Sourang in what has become one of President Abdoulaye Wade's most significant Cabinet reshuffles. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Long referred to as one of the "untouchables," Foreign Minister Gadio is the only Minister in Wade's government that had, up until yesterday, survived in his job since the PDS came to power in 2000. Long considered by everybody in the international community as one of the country's most able ministers, Gadio's removal from the cabinet, without a follow-on assignment, has raised questions as to why he was fired. In the Machiavellian world of Senegalese politics, it has long been known that many within the PDS and in the President's entourage had been jealous of Gadio's access to the President and his high international profile.

So begins the rumor mill  
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3. (SBU) According to sources close to the President, Gadio was the victim of his own success and that this firing was the result of an accumulation of these successes. For example, Gadio was widely praised by American officials during the recent signing of an MCC compact with Senegal to the detriment of presidential son Karim, who was told in no uncertain terms that he was not welcome at the event due to his having derailed a previous compact the MCC was on the verge of signing with Senegal in 2007. A member of the ruling PDS told Embassy that, although Karim is in charge of International cooperation, Gadio did everything he could to prevent him from playing a role in the finalization of the MCC compact and he had complained to his father about this lack of cooperation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Note. As to this latter matter, this was very much the preferred outcome of both this Embassy and MCA. End note.)

A Master of self promotion  
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4. (SBU) Wade's entourage admits that Gadio was a good minister, but they hasten to add that he was also working for himself. They indicate that he only appointed people loyal to him in Embassies. They said that only the Ambassadors were chosen by Wade and that Gadio always found a way to appoint his people to all other positions. One of Karim's aides told Embassy that, despite the fact that foreign affairs are "a domain reserve" (i.e. under the sole responsibility of the Head of State), Gadio either came up with reasons not to send people chosen by the President or made life difficult for them in Embassies. He added that there are several people the PDS wanted to be posted in Embassies, but that Gadio never acted on them during the past two years. But what is unforgivable in his view was that Gadio has set up "Mouvements de Soutien" (groups of supporters) among Senegalese living abroad with the goal of having political support if he runs in future presidential elections. What made these groups suspicious is that

Gadio never informed Wade about their existence.

Lack of solidarity

15. (SBU) Additionally, it is being said that Gadio contributed to a recently published book by respected investigative journalist Abdou Latif Coulibaly where he outlines in stark detail the catastrophic management and potential embezzlement of the formerly Karim Wade-run National Agency for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (ANOCI). This would seem to corroborate strong rumors, recently confirmed by a highly placed source, that Gadio is the eminence grise behind an anti-Karim movement within the PDS.

COMMENT

16. (SBU) The firing of Gadio seems to be part of a process of getting rid of all strong cabinet figures who may potentially compete with Karim for Wade's succession. This latest move will put Karim in a position to further control the PDS's vast patronage network. Wade seems to find it unacceptable that political figures who were anonymous before joining his cabinet now see themselves as his potential successors without his blessing. If Wade's strategy to clear the way for his son is fully implemented, Karim will be left as the dominant figure in the cabinet. For example, the new Foreign Minister is known as being part of Karim's entourage and acts as his sometime mentor. The strategy may work within the PDS but it remains to be seen whether or not Karim has enough time and charisma to alter his negative image among the voters. End Comment.

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